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THE IDENTITY OF EUROPEANS AFTER THE EU ENLARGEMENT

The enlargement of the European Union in 2004–2007 changed the borders of the polity, but also contributed to a crisis of the collective identity of Europeans. The inclusion of many new countries in the EU, relatively little known to the Western European public, generated questions concerning the common European framework of cultural heritage and way of life. Where are the borders of Europe, who is a European, and who is "the significant other" for the Europeans – that is, in relation to whom will Europeans construct their identity? These are the major questions occupying thoughts of scholars, intellectuals and public opinion in Europe and also are the main topic of our interest in this part of the volume.

Both "old" and "new" Europeans are experiencing an identity crisis. The citizens of the old 15 EU member states were confronted with enlargement without having been directly consulted, and without having had the chance to learn enough about the new members to accept them as "us" rather than "them" from behind the Iron Curtain. There is no clear concept of Eastern Europeans belonging to the community of Europeans, and frequent news in the media concerning the political behaviour of the Eastern Europeans or the lack of acceptance of crucial European values (such as tolerance, the secular state, the rule of law) has strengthened the feeling that the east of Europe is still divided from the west by a boundary of culture. The fear of competition in the labour market added to the feeling of anxiety and insecurity. Also, the fact that the enlargement was executed without democratic procedures, such as referenda, added to the popular impression that the European decision-making process is less than completely democratic.

Among the central questions determining the future of the EU after the enlargement is the one concerning the nature of European nations. How is national identity to be seen – as an ethnic entity, based on its cultural heritage, its traditional essence, and common ethnic origin, closed and exclusive, or as a political, civic construction, a future-oriented programme, open and inclusive. The discussion concerning national identity is among the most central in contemporary social science. The classic writings of Ernest Gellner (1983), Anthony D. Smith (1986), Eric Hobsbawm (1990), Benedict Anderson (1985) and others are followed by the concepts and ideas of such authors as Jürgen Habermas (1992, 2003), and Anthony Giddens (1991), who see

identity as a dynamic process of interactions, dialogue and negotiations, in which collective identities are constructed. Such a new approach gives a fresh meaning to the question of a supranational, European identity.

Initially, the concept of European identity was introduced to the European political agenda in the 1970s. It was designed during the Copenhagen EC summit in December 1973 (European Commission, 1973) in the face of the ongoing global crisis. A few assumptions lay at the base of the concept. The European identity was supposed to be "based on the principle of the unity of the Nine, on their responsibility towards the rest of the world, and on the dynamic nature of the European construction" (Stråth 2002: 388). With the consolidation and deepening of European integration, the concept became even more important, despite various debates on its content, applicability and function (for more general discussion on the concept of collective identity see: Von Busekist 2004; Eder 2009; Brubaker and Cooper 2000). As Cathleen Kantner comments "[w]ithout a 'collective identity' beyond the border of the national communities as common ground for common future projects, European effort to institutionalise common political solutions, procedures, and sometimes very expensive commitments might fail" (2006: 506). But what should a European identity consist of?

Conventionally, European identity was based on shared and mobilising cultural commons defined through heritage and tradition stemming from "classical Greco-Roman civilisation, Christianity and the ideas of the Enlightenment, Science, Reason, Progress and Democracy" (Stråth 2002: 388). Crucial for definition of European identity was also the concept of the "significant other" vis-à-vis whom the Europeans constructed their self-understanding. Scholars stress that historically, for construction of European identity three "mirrors" were of particular importance – the Oriental/Asian, the American and the East European (Stråth 2002: 391, see also: Said 1979, Kumar 2008; Habermas and Derrida 2003). The last of the three is most interesting from the point of view of the focus of this volume.

Establishment of Central and Eastern Europe as a concept of demarcation was part of the Enlightenment project. This region was not ascribed to "barbarians", but was perceived as an ambiguous space, characterised by backwardness. "Construction of Eastern Europe was a paradox of simultaneous inclusion and exclusion: Europe, but at the same time, not Europe" (Stråth 2002: 393). The role of the significant other, especially in relation to the European integration project, became particularly significant during the Cold War. Before 1989, the Iron Curtain, a sinister symbol of division of Europe, was also a convenient instrument of classification, a boundary which helped to construct and to express the collective identity of the integrating, western half of the continent. It was easy enough to think in terms of "who we are", if on the other side of the Berlin Wall everything was different. Western Europe was democratic, free, prosperous, liberal, respecting human rights and market economy, while Eastern Europe was dictatorial, oppressed, and poor. It was clear who was "the significant other", the partner of identity construction, without whom the concept of Europeanness would have no meaning, or at least would lack clarity.

When the Iron Curtain disappeared, and the unification process started, followed some years later by the formal accession of Central and Eastern Europe to the Eu-

ropean Union, the important question of collective European identity was raised again. What would it now mean to be European? In relation to whom would the common European identity be constructed? Where would the new European boundary be placed? What would be, if any, a common background of cultural symbols and values, on the basis of which the collective identity of the enlarged EU would be built? What is it that all the member states and their societies have in common, and how does this differ from the cultural, political and social identity of the European neighbours, the significant others, in relation to whom the European identity is being constructed? The future of European integration largely depends on how these questions will be answered.

One of the important issues to discuss is the relations between the "old" and the "new" member states, broadly identified with Western and Eastern (post-communist) Europe. Gerard Delanty in this volume deals with this question. He argues that the EU does not have a political or cultural identity in any meaningful sense, while the identity of nation-states has been undermined as a result of both Europeanisation and the wider process of globalisation. It is the case, Delanty argues, that it has been nation-states who have been the winners, in that with few, if any, exceptions most member states have benefited from EU membership and, as far as identity is concerned, national identity is far from being in demise. He further says that the current situation is more complicated and that one should recognise the modification of nation-states by Europeanisation. In his view one should not look for a European level of identity over and beyond national identities, but for the process of construction of a mixed or hybrid nature of national identities. Delanty's main interest in the paper included in this volume is what he considers to be the changing relations of centres and peripheries. He believes that what used to be a European periphery (the east) is now emerging from marginalisation to become a site of cosmopolitan rebordering. The post-enlargement Europe is thus the post-Western Europe. He also mentions an important fact, that the societies of Central and Eastern Europe have put the brakes on the deepening of EU integration, although he claims that the consequences of this are not to stop further development of Europeanisation, but rather to develop it further within a different model of modernity. I do not quite agree with this argument. For the post-communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe and their societies, European integration has been from the beginning a process of modernisation, in which hopes, dreams and aspirations were invested. Central and Eastern Europeans wanted not just to get rid of communism and to become free, but they wished to follow the model of the West, in its political, cultural, and (perhaps most strongly) economic model. The dream was not just to be non-communist, but to become Western. So the process of accession to the EU was for them a modernising process, in which modernisation equalled Westernisation. Of course, the concept of the West was much idealised, with often naïve enthusiasm for what was seen as traditional Western values, little recognition of the existing internal differences within the Western world, and ignorance of conflicts between different Western states. An example of this may be the shock experienced by Eastern candidate countries when they supported the USA-led invasion of Iraq only to discover that many Western European states had no intention to do so and were

frustrated and angry when George W. Bush received unconditional support from Eastern European soon-to-become EU member states. Nevertheless, the new members did not have any alternative model of modernisation to offer as an alternative to the Western one. They had little if anything to contribute, except a fresh enthusiasm for those Western values which in the West have in the meantime largely been forgotten, taken for granted, or criticised. They have no different vision of Europe and European integration. Once they became members of the EU, they concentrated on defending what they considered to be their national interests, mainly as far as the distribution of financial support was concerned, sometimes trying to have their national dignity and pride satisfied. But in all this there has been little concern with Europe as a whole and no alternative model of European integration. Slowing down of the internal EU integration process was indeed, as Delanty claims, partly caused by the enlargement, yet not by the need to negotiate with new members which direction the integration would take, but rather by the situation in which it was necessary to struggle against resistance of one or another new member against proposed reforms leading to deeper integration. The position of Václav Klaus or the Kaczyński twins may be an example of this. They tried to stop the new European treaty not because they had an alternative one to propose, but because they were afraid that the treaties would undermine the traditionally understood sovereignty of their states. The Treaty Constitution for Europe was turned down by two old EU members, but one of the main reasons for the negative result of the referenda was the effect of the enlargement, the fear among citizens of "old Europe" that Europe after enlargement was less familiar, that the new Europeans were in fact strangers, with whom it was wiser not to integrate too closely, and that it was better not to delegate too much power to EU institutions, but to hide behind the familiar borders of the nation state. The difficulties in integrating new member states into the EU result from their problems with implementation of EU rules, and perhaps from populism in some sectors of their societies, but not from an intention to develop in an alternative way. The old pattern of centre-periphery relations seems also to be confirmed by the widespread labour migration from the East to the West, in which migrants take advantage of job opportunities, but do not contribute with an alternative way of life or values, rather trying to learn from the West.

A difficult challenge for the new member states in their process of integration and building a new, European identity is to reconstruct their own, traditional identities in such a way that they are more compatible with processes developing in the "old" Europe. There are two important aspects of this issue, both represented in the papers included in this volume. One is the concept of pluralism, including the position of minorities in national culture, civil society and democratic politics. Another is the problem of historical memory, and more particularly the great themes which dominate the European collective memory, but which may to a lesser extent have been represented in the national memories of the Eastern European states. Delanty argues that Eastern Europe has a long way to go in linking citizenship with diversity. It is very true that Eastern Europe is dominated by an ethnic concept of nation, in which minorities are seen as "others", while their culture is excluded from the boundaries of the national culture. It is essential, especially in a highly mobile European society, to overcome

this legacy of the pre-communist and communist era and to replace an ethnic concept of nation with a civic one, which accepts cultural diversity among citizens and which sees national integration mainly in terms of political culture, civic values and a common programme for the future. Such a forward-looking political understanding of national identity, rather than a past-looking ethnic concept, seems to be much better adjusted to the present political and social reality of Europe. André Liebich also discusses differences between the Eastern and the Western European conceptions of the nation, and links them to the differences in experience with minorities, especially immigrants. Eastern Europeans are strongly attached to their traditional concept of unity of nation understood in cultural terms, and they find it difficult to embrace such concepts as multilingualism or any elements of federalism. Although the opposition of East and West regarding the concept of nation seems here to be rather oversimplified, it remains true that new member states need to learn from their Western fellow EU members how to integrate their societies according to the principles of pluralism, internal diversity and openness.

Georges Mink discusses the need to reconstruct collective memory in new Europe, especially in view of the need for reconciliation between countries which in the past experienced conflicts. Bitter memories divide neighbours, but there is also much resentment in Eastern Europe directed at Western European countries – not only former enemies, but also countries accused of betrayal of the East and of giving it over to Russia as the Soviet zone of influence. The Polish memory of Yalta is an example here. The question of historical memory is yet another example of asymmetry in centre-periphery relations. The West is an important significant other for the East, but the opposite is not true. The historical memory of the West has largely neglected, ignored and marginalised the East. In order to build a common European identity this asymmetry ought to be overcome. For the moment Eastern member states do not seem likely to collectively forget their memories and to adopt those of the West. They have their own memories. On the other hand there is a need to include the East of Europe in some key themes of the historical European heritage, such as the responsibility for the Holocaust, and colonialism. Most Eastern countries do not feel responsible for colonialism, but if they are to be part of the common European heritage, they must accept also the dark side of it as their own legacy. To construct a common historical narrative might take a long time, but an effort in this direction seems to be an important condition of the success of European integration and of the construction of a common European identity.

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